

Inside Trauma



A word from the Editor

As typical workloads increase over time, burnout is becoming more prevalent in the workplace.

It has been found that stress-related presenteeism and absenteeism are costing the Australian economy \$14.81 billion a year. Stress-related presenteeism and absenteeism are directly costing employers \$10.11 billion a year. 3.2 days per worker are lost each year through workplace stress (Medibank Private, 2008)

Burnout is described as a particular type of prolonged occupational stress with exhaustion (physical, emotional, and mental) as its core symptom. Burnout in the workplace can lead to an increase in:

- absenteeism
- greater staff turnover
- negative commitment to work
- unsafe working practices and accidents
- increased incidence of litigation over stress-related issues
- decreased productivity



There are many solutions in reducing burnout in the workplace. These will be described in the following articles.

It is important to notify supervisors and managers if you are experiencing burnout to minimise the long term effects.

Elizabeth D'Silva
Provisional Psychologist

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P: (03) 9205 9488

E: reception@traumacentre.com.au

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The effects of workplace burnout

Work place burnout can be described as a cumulative reaction to a build-up of stressors and pressures over a long period of time. It is something which progresses slowly and advances gradually; burnout has been described, by psychologist Herbert Freudenberger – the man who coined the term – as the most ultimate emotional exhaustion (ASCC, 2005). It manifests itself in various physical and psychological symptoms; even though each person experiences work place burnout differently, the basic tendencies are the same (Maslach, 2008). It is a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion; leaving one to feel that they have nothing more to give (Smith, Segal & Segal, 2015).



The physical effects of burnout include: feeling lethargic and unwell most of the time with constant headaches, muscle pains and a change in appetite and in sleeping habits. The behavioural effects of burnout include: social withdrawal, disengagement, procrastination and may involve alcohol or other drug use as a way of coping (Smith, Segal & Segal, 2015). The most damaging effect that burnout can have on a person is on their emotional wellbeing; burnout has the power to strip away a person's hope and intrinsic motivation to keep going, they are left to cope with a sense of emptiness, loneliness and helplessness (Smith, Segal & Segal, 2015).

When burnout takes over it does not let go – pulling people down into feelings of depression and anxiety. Burnout is a real and prevalent issue within the health services industry which can easily go unnoticed with the effects being subtle at first as they slowly progress however, they can result in long lasting issues if not addressed. The long lasting symptoms of burnout have been compared to the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and in the following link the similarities are described.

Javiera Palacios
Undergraduate Counsellor

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“Burnout is nature's way of telling you, you've been going through the motions your soul has departed; you're a zombie, a member of the walking dead, a sleepwalker. False optimism is like administering stimulants to an exhausted nervous system.”
— Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*

"The people that really take risks in life are those that stay in jobs they hate and relationships that suck the life out of them."

— A Daring Adventure



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Burnout

Burnout in the workplace may be experienced when trauma is present. When we talk about trauma, this includes level of responsibility at work, feeling like there are insufficient resources to do your job, more hours spent with people experiencing trauma or being exposed to distressing material at work. In addition, inadequate time off, lack of supportive workplace culture or inability to speak out (1800Respect, 2014). All the above factors contribute to what we call BURNOUT!

Untreated trauma in the workplace can lead to decreased productivity, poor morale in the workplace and increased stress for staff.

Individuals find identity and meaning from their jobs and careers, when we are passionate and committed to our work, work overload can get the better of us. Consequently, the things that inspire passion and enthusiasm are stripped away, and unpleasant and tedious things crowd in (Smith, 2015). Self-care in the workplace is essential and aids in maintaining an individual's well-being and health.

Self-care is not about self-indulgence, it's about self-preservation.

—Audrey Lorde

What strategies can be used to prevent burnout?

Having and maintaining interests that separate you from work and the stresses encountered at work.

Taking up opportunities for debriefing and other therapeutic support.

Taking breaks at work and from work when needed.

Maintaining connections with people outside the field.

Accepting support and positive feedback when it is offered and in turn giving support and positive feedback to others.

Physical activity and other bodily self-care, including seeking treatment for any illnesses.

Identifying successes and reminding yourself of the successes.

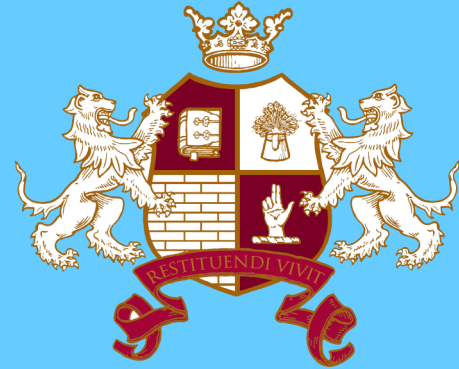
Maintain a spiritual practice.

Sleep, sleep and more sleep.

Humour!.

Ludo Ndhlovu

Undergraduate Counsellor



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Working Smarter to Reduce Risk Factors for Work-Induced Trauma

Any and anyone can be affected by work- induced trauma/ stress. The impact can vary from person to person; some aspects are wide ranging while others effect only certain areas of people's lives. Examples of lower level trauma may be 'Burn out' and 'Exhaustion' escalating to vicarious trauma encompassing nightmares, depression and fear. What can we/you do to manage this?

The term working smarter was drummed into me when I started at the bottom the corporate ladder. There are simple techniques for everyone to use to reducing stress and the onslaught of trauma.

You may consider a 4 step plan.

Step 1. a) Prioritise tasks at hand – rank jobs/tasks and allocate a time for completion

- b) List jobs in order
- c) Learning to say "NO" may mean your list is achievable
- d) Concentrate on one thing at a time

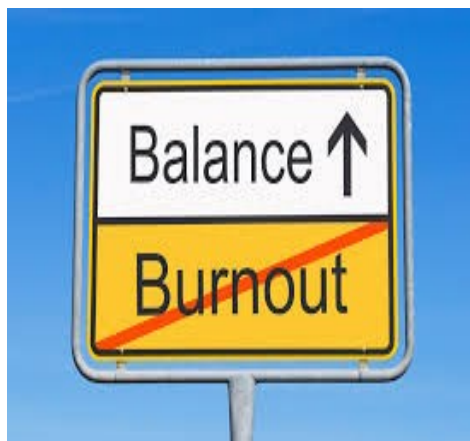
Step 2. a) Interacting with people

- b) Effective/efficient communication
- c) Focus on getting more done

Step 3. a) Use good quality materials

- b) Evaluate your methods (do you work better with less?)
- c) Shortcuts
- d) Delegate to match the right person for that part of the job

Step 4. Care for yourself – REST AND TAKE BREAKS!



Upcoming Events:

TAPIG Presents:
"Managing an Effective Trauma Response in Large Organisations"

What:

Managing the trauma response in large organisations poses unique issues such as assisting site leaders to understand and acknowledge the impact of specific events, provide information which enables them to act appropriately and to source professional guidance in the management of themselves and their staff. From an organisational perspective, cost considerations, consistency of response, appropriate follow-up and the capturing of data to inform preventative strategies are key issues.

When:

Saturday 5th September 2015 at 9.30am to 4.00pm

Where:

78 Franklin St, Forrest ,ACT, 2603

Cost (Inc. GST):

Early Bird Discount
APS Member - \$105.00
Non APS Member - \$125
Student - \$75



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Remember: Most people are never taught how to work, but we are all focused toward achieving things in what we are doing.

Old thinking = reverberates that we need to do more.

New thinking = a challenge towards a journey of less stress and trauma.

This article smacks of new-age thinking however, this is not the case. Better work life is about becoming a more actualised person. There will only ever be two rules, two keys to unlock the shackles of pressure, stress and emotional fatigue.

Rule 1. Management

Rule 2. Plan

Whether Rule 2 comes first or vice-versa the outcome is the same. We can manage to plan or plan to manage.

Why work smarter, rather than harder? Terms such as putting in the hard yards, you get out what you put in, are cliché: this may ring true but fails to motivate us towards discipline, critical thinking and outcomes. You may also ask what is in it for me?

Peter Horton
Psychologist



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